

Male on male sexual harassment at workplace is on the rise: report

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Getty The percentage of sexual harassment charges men are filing with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) doubled between 1992 and 2008, Newsweek reported.

Guys who are sexually harassed by other guys in the workplace are starting to speak up. Sexual harassment charges filed by men are on the rise: the percentage of

sexual harassment charges men are filing with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) doubled between 1992 and 2008, reports Newsweek, from 8% to 16%.

"We are receiving more and more charges by males complaining about sexual harassment," says EEOC spokesman James Ryan. "And anecdotally, more of these cases are male-on-male sexual harassment. There is no question that males can be the victims of sexual harassment in the workplace, and there is no excuse for it."

Although the EEOC keeps track of the number of men and women who file harassment claims, they don't keep statistics on the gender of the harasser.

The stereotypical sexual harassment image certainly isn't of two men.

"The classic image of sexual harassment is Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill; it's not two men or even two women," Georgetown University psychiatry professor Dr. Liza H. Gold tells Newsweek.

But for both genders, sexual harassment is linked to issues of control and the misuse

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of power with the intent to humiliate as much as it's tied to sexual attraction.

The current economic climate may be why man-to-man sexual harassment cases appear to be on the increase.

"In tough times, you have more layoffs and more terminations," explains Joshua Zuckerberg, a partner in the labor and employment department of Pryor Cashman. "You see more people being frustrated by these terminations and challenging them. People are trying to find a theory to challenge their termination."

Overworked employees are under a lot more stress these days than they were before the recession, says Roberta Chinsky Matuson, president of Human Resource Solutions and author of the forthcoming "Tossed Into Management! The New Manager's Guide to Influencing Up and Down the Organization."

"When people are asked to do the jobs of three people and are getting sexually harassed on top of it, they may just step up and say, I am not going to take this anymore."

But man-on-man sexual harassment

charges can be tough to prove in court, Zuckerberg says.

"Just being a jerk in the workplace is not actionable," he explains. "If I go around and harass men and women alike, it's unlikely that that is actionable. For a man to prove man-on-man sexual harassment in federal court, they must prove it is based on gender." Better education about just what constitutes workplace sexual harassment, and a relaxation on unspoken taboos about openly discussing it are also paving the way for more men to come forward.

"It is no longer embarrassing to bring this up," Matuson says. "Years ago no one talked about their plastic surgery. Now people post about it on Facebook and join fan clubs for their plastic surgeons. People are talking about man-on-man sexual harassment."

What the EEOC wants workers to know is that sexual harassment in the workplace of any kind is illegal.

"It is wrong regardless of the gender of the perpetrator or the victim," Ryan says. "It's just as illegal when it is male-on-male as when it involves different sexes."

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